



Chapters 1 and 2

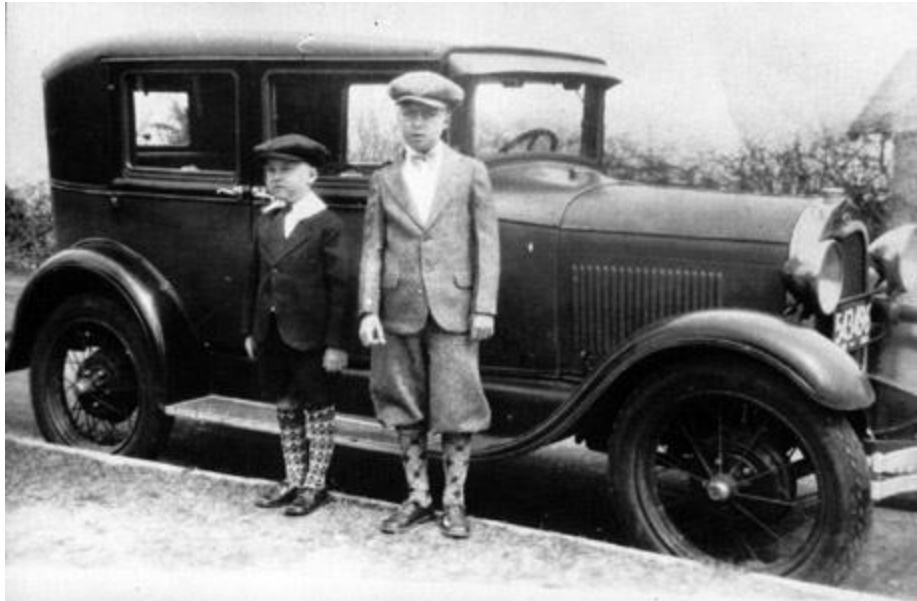
# ***The Great Gatsby***



# Chapter 1



# Advice from my father



- Nick says he remembers his father saying, "Whenever you feel like criticizing any one ... just remember that all the people in the world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

# Quote?



- Voltaire (and Stan Lee's *Spider-Man*):  
"With great power comes great responsibility."
- Luke 12:48: "From the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (NIV).
- President John Kennedy: "For of those to whom much is given, much is required"



# Good listener in college

- Inclined to “reserve all judgment”
- Victim of a few “veteran” bores
- Confidences were “unsought”



# Only Gatsby was exempt

- Wanted no more “riotous excursions”
- “Gatsby represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.”
- “Something gorgeous about him”
- “Heightened sensitivities to the promises of life”
- “An extraordinary gift for hope”



# "No ... Gatsby turned out all right

- ... at the end."
- "It was what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and shortwinded elations of men."



# Who is narrator?

- Nick Carraway
- Prominent family in “this” Middle Western city for 3 generations
- Graduated from New Haven [Yale] in 1915
- Father also a Yale
- Went to WWI – the “Great War”
- Decided to go East and learn the bond business





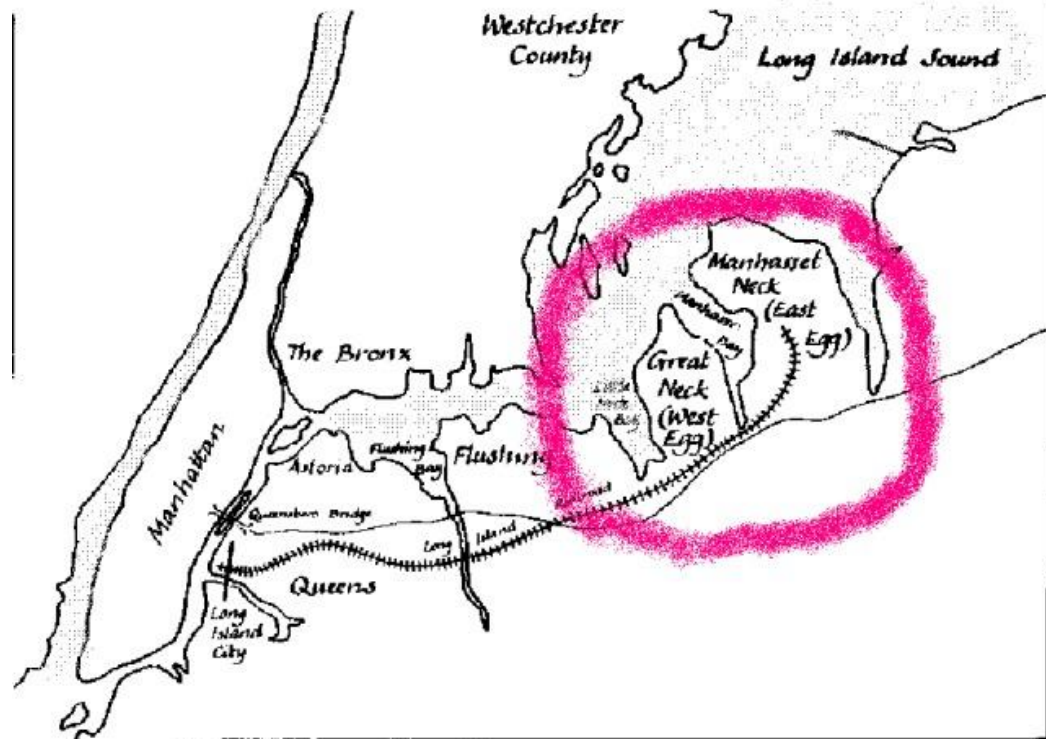
# Where does he live?

- Weather-beaten  
“cardboard” bungalow
- \$80 a month
- “I had that familiar  
conviction that life was  
beginning over again  
with the summer.”
- “On my right, was a colossal  
affair...”



# Begins to describe West Egg

- “One of the strangest communities in North America”
- Due east of New York
- Twenty miles from the city
- Two enormous eggs [peninsulas]
- Separated by a courtesy bay
- Jut out into Long Island Sound



# West Egg ... and Gatsby's Mansion

- Less fashionable
- "House on right was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden."



# East Egg ... the fashionable side

- White palaces
- Glittered along the water
- History of the summer begins here





# Nick knew Tom at Yale; Daisy's cousin

- Daisy – second cousin once removed
- Tom – reached “an acute limited excellence at twenty-one ... everything afterward savors of anticlimax”
- Family was enormously wealthy
- Paradox: “I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all.”



# More about Tom

- “Sturdy straw-haired man”
- “Hard mouth, supercilious manner”
- “Shining arrogant eyes”
- “Enormous power of ... body”
- “Glistening boots ... strained top lacing”
- “Great pack of muscle”
- “A body capable of enormous leverage – a cruel body”



# Interior of house

- High hallways, bright rosy-colored space
- “Fragilely bound ... by French windows at either end”
- Windows ... gleaming white against fresh grass “that seemed to grow a little way into the house.”
- “Curtains ... like pale flags, twisting ... up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling...”



# Two women

- On the couch were two young women
- “buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon”
- “Both dressed in white; dresses were rippling and fluttering”
- “Whip and snap of the curtains... groan of the picture ... a boom as Tom ... shut the windows and the ... two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.”





# Daisy Buchanan

- “I’m p-paralyzed with happiness.”
- “She laughed again as if she had said something witty.”
- “Low, trilling voice”
- “Each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again.”
- Mother of a three-year-old



# Jordan Baker

- “I’m stiff. I’ve been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember.”
- Bored, discontented
- Professional golfer



# "I know somebody there."

- "You must know Gatsby."
- "Gatsby? What Gatsby?"



# Differences between East and West Eggs

East Egg	West Egg
Old family money (aristocrats)	New money ("nouveau riche")
Well educated at ivy league schools	More than likely have learned on the job
More sophisticated	Less sophisticated
Consumed with subtle materialism	Less consumed with materialism due to lack of knowledge of "the good life"
"Socialites"	Wannabes
Polite, genteel society	Lack refinement, manners, and taste
Society generally corrupt, jaded	Society usually more innocent, naive



# Tom's misguided ideas

- Social Darwinism is a misguided social theory that attempts to adapt Charles Darwin's principles of [natural selection](#) and apply them to human society. This social theory promotes a culture that embraces the concept of the "survival of the fittest" whereby using it to explain poverty and to justify class distinctions between individuals, as well as, the imbalances of power between races, and nations.



# "Tom's got some woman in NY"

- "I thought everybody knew."
- "She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don't you think?"
- Tense gayety continues.



# Cynical Daisy confides in Nick

- “I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl ... I turned my head and wept. I’m glad it’s a girl. And I hope she’ll be a fool – that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.”



# A figure emerged from the shadow

- “I saw that I was not alone”
- “standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars”





# He stretched out his arms

- Toward the dark water
- “in a curious way”
- “I could have sworn he was trembling”
- “distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock”
- “he had vanished”



# Green light as symbol

- Central symbol
- Will gain meaning as novel progresses
- Reader does not know yet that it's at the end of Daisy's dock
- Nick admires Gatsby because of his dream – associates it with the green light
- Color green: spring, hope, youth
- As long as Gatsby gazes at the green light, the dream lives on

# Chapter 2



# Valley of Ashes

- “a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens”
- “...where ashes take the forms ... of men who move dimly”
- “gray cars”





# The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg

- Eyes blue and gigantic, a yard wide
- "They look out of no face"
- "Yellow spectacles pass over a non-existent nose"
- "Wild wag of an oculist set them there and then sank down into eternal blindness"



# The “Mythic God”

- Eyes = god of the modern world?  
God of the wasteland below?
- Mythic god (eyes) no longer involved with the petty lives of creatures below
- Remember: Size of eyes, missing face, departure of original creator
- All work together to transform eyes into something mythic – a god who no longer cares



# T.S. Eliot's "Wasteland"

- Fitzgerald impacted by Eliot's "The Wasteland" (1922)
- "The Wasteland" contains figures who go through the motions of life with no spiritual center
- Expresses anxiety, frustration, emptiness of post-WWI generation cut off from spiritual values by shock of war





# “Hello, Wilson, old man”

- George Wilson:  
“...a piece of waste  
... a blond, spiritless  
man, anemic, and  
faintly handsome”
- Dead inside? Living  
ghost? No energy,  
no faith
- George  
underestimates  
power of Tom





# Myrtle Wilson



- “Thickish figure of a woman ... middle thirties, and faintly stout, ... carried her surplus weight sensuously”
- “Face contained no facet or gleam of beauty”
- “There was an immediately perceptible vitality about her”
- She sees Tom as a lover who can take her away from the gray prison of the Valley of Ashes

# Myrtle's Opinion of George

- "Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive"



# New York in the 1920s





# Center of Corruption

- Wealth, Corruption, and Self-gratification openly meet in New York
- Anything is permitted
- Fake pedigreed dogs sold on corners
- *Town Tattle* is a popular “scandal mag”
- Myrtle parades through New York, unknown to anyone of worth, purchasing trinkets, acting “well-heeled”





# Nick: A dim hazy cast ...



- Nick gets drunk for only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in his life; his memories are foggy
- New York "friends" were called by Myrtle
- Myrtle sits on Tom's lap as party swings on
- Sister Catherine arrives
- Conversation is absurd and pretentious; everyone tries to impress each other; lies flow freely, as does liquor

# Pretentiousness

- “With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change”
- “...she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air”
- “I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you’d of thought she had my appendicitis out”
- Myrtle “rejected the compliment by raising her eyebrow in disdain”
- “It’s just a crazy old thing. I just slip it on when I don’t care what I look like.”
- “If Chester could only get you in that pose ...”



# Why did Myrtle marry George?

- "I thought he was a gentleman"
- "I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe"
- "He borrowed someone's best suit to get married in, and never even told me ..."
- "They've been living over that garage for eleven years"
- "And Tom's the first sweetie she ever had..."



# Back to the party

- Nick wanted to leave, get out, walk east, get some fresh air
- Instead, he always became “engulfed in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair”
- “I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.”





# Tom and Myrtle face-to-face

- Does Myrtle have any right to mention Daisy's name?
- "Daisy! Daisy! Daisy! ... I'll say it whenever I want to!"





# Tom breaks Myrtle's nose

- With a “short, deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with an open hand.”
- Tom is brutal, absolutely selfish
- Why punish Myrtle? For challenging the “purity” of Daisy



# Juxtapose the two parties ...

Dinner Party on East Egg	Impromptu Party in New York
Quiet dinner among friends	Drunken brawl among acquaintances
Wealth clearly evident	Affected veneer of wealth apparent
Bigoted ideas championed by Tom	Jealous ideas contended by Myrtle
Tom and Daisy's daughter off with nanny	Tom buys Myrtle a dog to love
Jordan Baker – a “hanger-on” who is definitely not in training	Catherine, Mr. and Mrs. McKee, obviously impressed with Myrtle's situation
How do each of these parties end?	

End of Chapter Two: Next, a third party at Gatsby's





# From the new version

